



MySTEMGrowth Survey

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Presentation Overview

1. Project Problem
Slide 06

2. Project
Introduction
Slide 07

3. Full Stack Overview
Slide 08

4. User Interaction &
Timeline
Slide 09

5. Student User
Overview
Slide 10

6. Mobile View
Slide 11

Presentation Overview

7. Program
Coordinator Overview
Slide 12

8. Preliminary
Program Coordinator
Improvements
Slide 13

9. Admin Overview
Slide 14

10. Cloud
Infrastructure
Slide 15

11. Digital Ocean
Slide 16

12. CI/CD Changes
Slide 17

Presentation Overview

13. Backend
Slide 19

14. Basic Security
Testing
Slide 20

15. Vulnerability Results
Slide 21

16. Security
Innovation Plan
Slide 22

17. Implementation
Plans
Slide 23

18. Questions
Slide 24

Project Problem

Why was the current survey not ideal?

- Data Collection was a manual process
- Returning results to students was delayed
- No way to provide extra resources

What were the desired improvements to the existing tool?

- Return results immediately to students
- Show differential between survey attempts
- Provide links to extra resources

What trade offs were there with a standalone tool?

- Tool had to be built from scratch
- Hosting the website would have to be part of the project
- No bug/issue fixing by third party, all on the team

Project Introduction

What is the MySTEMGrowth Survey tool?

- Website + survey tool
- Supports 3 types of users
- Program affiliated Institutions

How can the MySTEMGrowth Survey be used

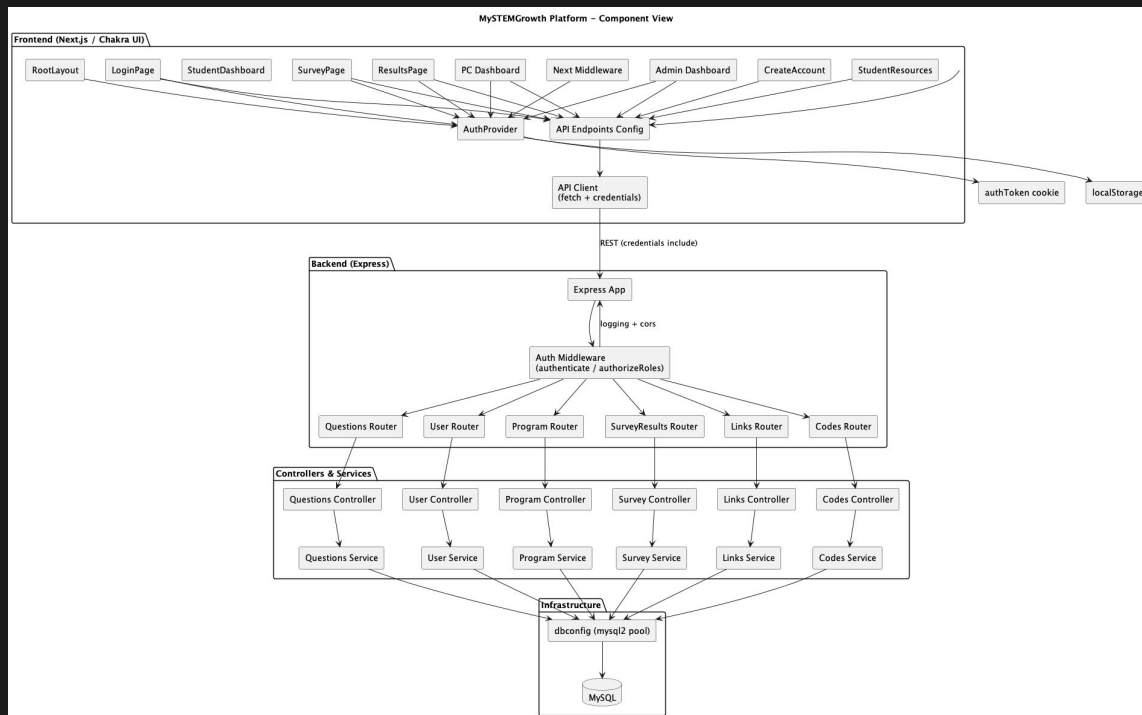
- Take the survey
- Complete undergraduate research program
- After course completion, take the survey again to compare results

What results does the MySTEMGrowth Survey provide?

- Civic Engagement
- STEM Interests
- STEM Self Efficacy
- STEM Outcome Expectations
- Research Outcome Expectations
- Research Self Efficacy

Full Stack Overview

- The Frontend is built with [React.js](#) and [Node.js](#) to build the interactive elements that we have discussed so far
- [Node.js](#) is used to build the backend and controller layer. Routers are built to be called by the web app, and use the controllers and service to interact with the cloud infrastructure.
- DBconfig is a JavaScript framework called by all the Service systems that allows them to interact with the database. It inherits the database from Environment Variables upon launch of the program.



User Interaction & Timeline

→ Students

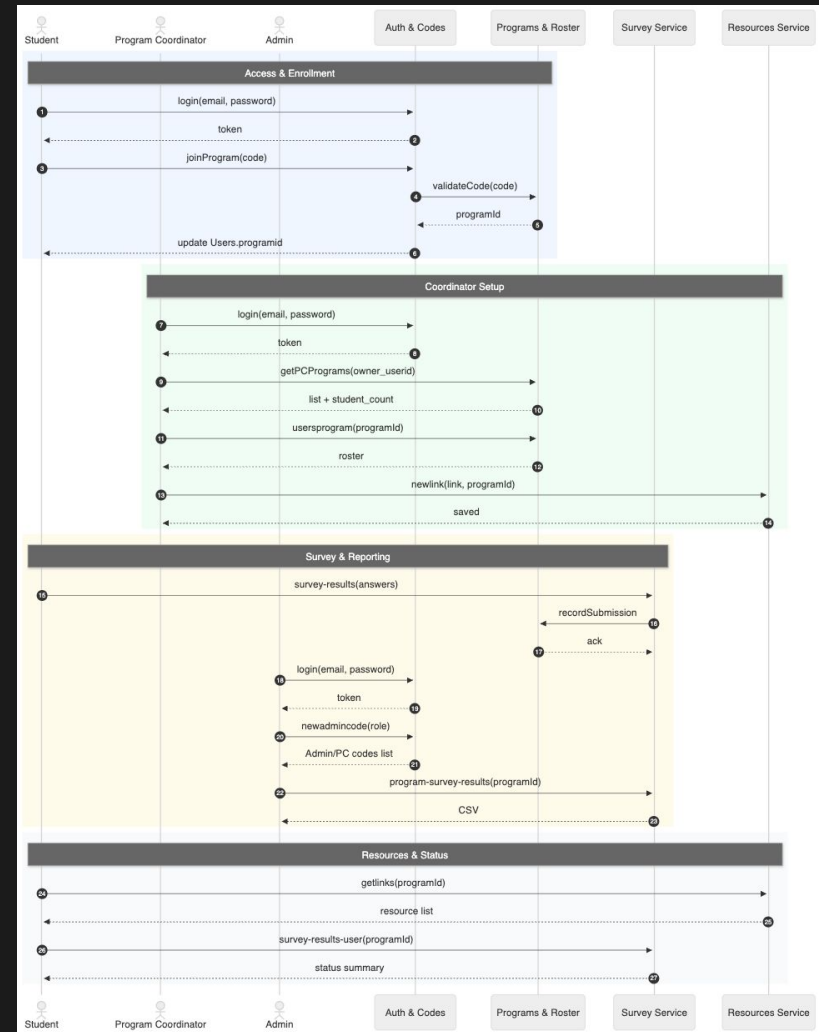
- ◆ Simple enrollment and secure login flow
- ◆ Clear access to assigned surveys
- ◆ Minimal effort to submit responses
- ◆ Confirmation that submissions are recorded

→ Program Coordinators

- ◆ Efficient program setup and student onboarding
- ◆ Add or delete resources for programs
- ◆ Ability to manage rosters

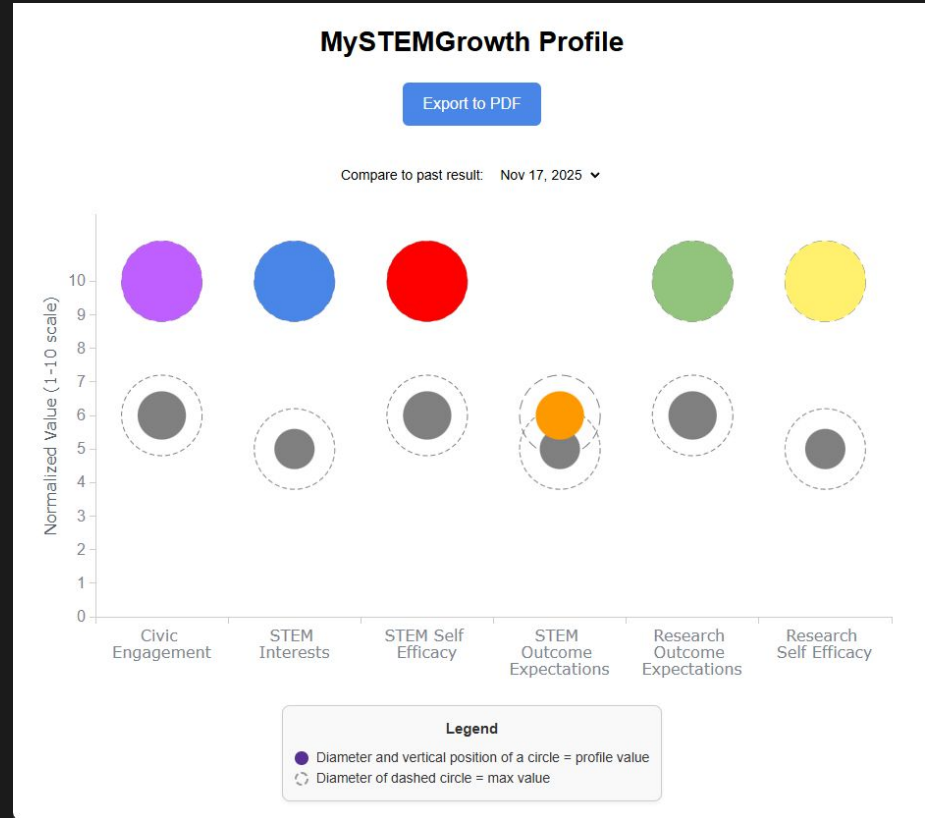
→ Administrators

- ◆ Create and manage programs and coordinators
- ◆ Control access codes and permissions
- ◆ Monitor system-wide survey activity
- ◆ Ensure data integrity and consistency
- ◆ Export survey results for reporting and evaluation



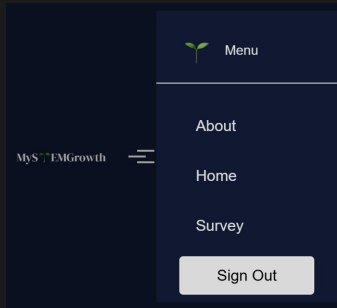
Student User Overview

- A dashboard was created to give users easy access to the survey, results and additional resources
- After the survey is taken, results are immediately available for students to see
- Results are able to be viewed comparatively by a dropdown, allowing students to see what areas they have improved in for their program

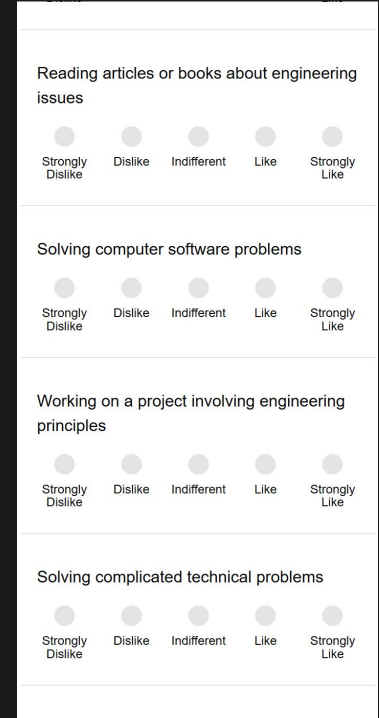
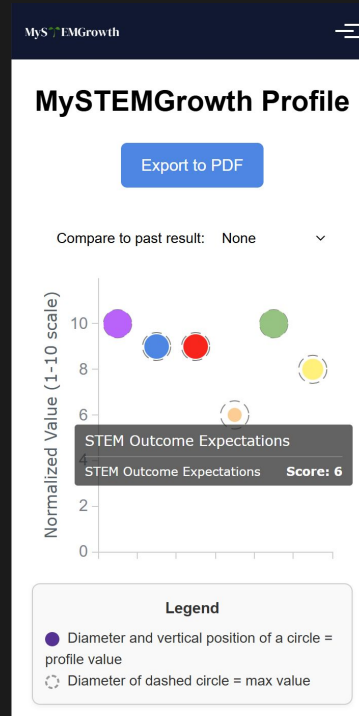


Mobile View

→ One of the most prominent features that this app was lacking when we inherited the project was mobile compatibility. Survey had to be taken on a computer web browser to be usable

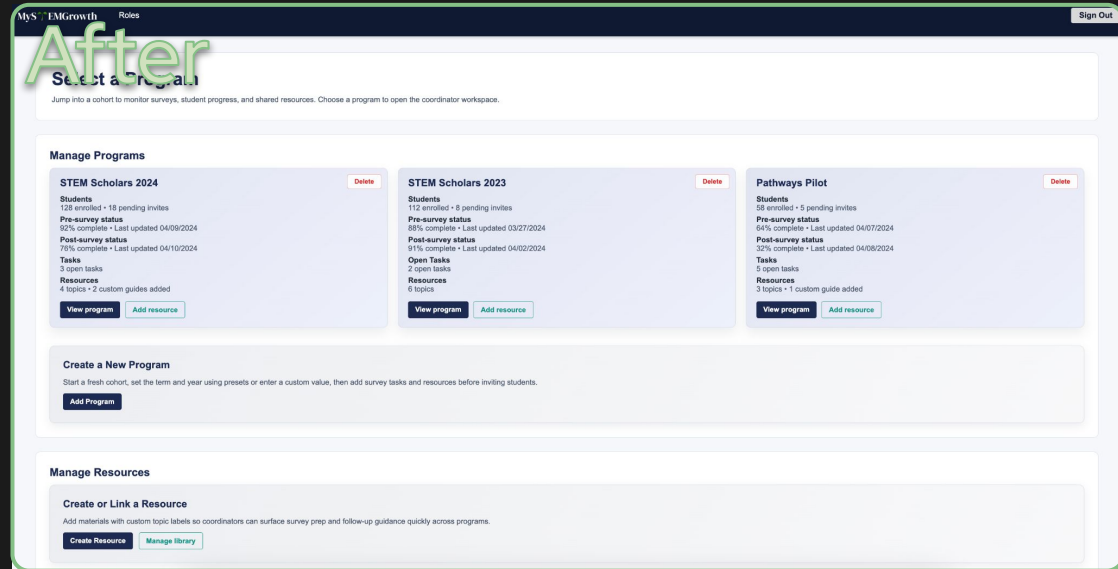
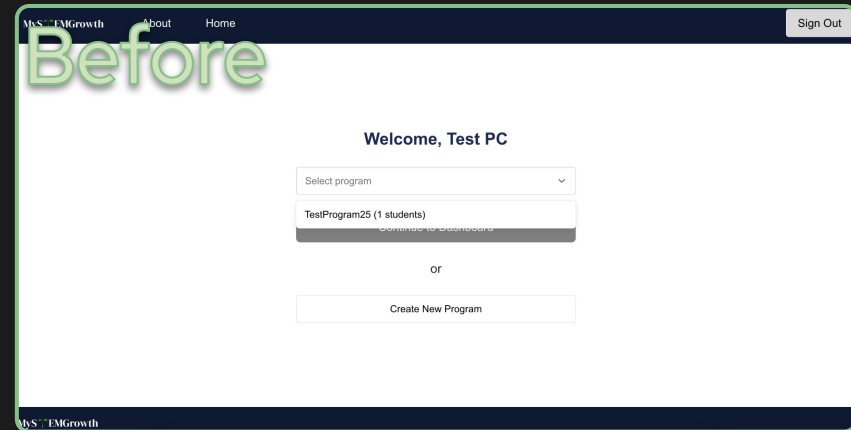


Welcome to your
MySTEMGrowth
Student Dashboard!



Program Coordinator Overview

- The program coordinator creates programs and manages them by inviting students, starting surveys, and adding resources
- They can manage multiple programs but only have access to their own programs
- Functionally, program coordinator operates the same with adjustments to the User Interface for a better overview of current programs and easier/more straightforward navigation



Preliminary Program Coordinator Improvements

- With the new centralized program coordinator dashboard, it makes getting information about the progress of programs much easier and reduces time spent navigating between programs and tools
- Key workflows, like student roster and resources, are easy to get to so the program coordinator can get the information that they want quickly without having to search for it
- Tasks help the program coordinator stay organized and on track with everything that's going on so that they don't forget crucial actions involved with that program, making managing multiple programs easier
- At-a-Glance Survey Status with visual indicators for completed, in-progress, and missing responses helps identify students to follow up with quickly

STEM Scholars 2024

Manage cohorts, track tasks for surveys, and keep students on track. Choose a program to get started.

[View as Student](#) [Switch Program](#)

Term: Spring 2024 Coordinator: Maya Jenkins Last updated: Apr 12

- Confirm pre- and post-survey windows before inviting students.
- Add program-specific resources with custom topics for quick discovery.
- Use tasks to plan nudges and follow-up around survey cycles.

Program Overview



What's next

Review post-survey status for pending students and schedule the next reminder task.

Term details

- Program window: Jan 22 – May 30
- Survey cadence: pre (week 1), post (final week)
- Primary contact: maya.jenkins@myemgrowth.org

Key Workflows

Student Roster

Manage enrollments, update student info, and export rosters for survey tracking.

[Open roster](#) [Export roster for surveys](#)

Survey Preparation

Confirm survey windows, templates, and automations before scheduling reminders.

[Survey gallery](#) [Question examples](#)

Resources

Share guides, recordings, and checklists that keep students ready for survey milestones.

[Manage program resources](#) [Add resource](#) [Create resource](#)

Tasks

Send pre-survey reminders

Type: SURVEY_REMINDER_PRE Due: Apr 12

[Mark done](#) [Dismiss](#)

Send post-survey reminders

Type: SURVEY_REMINDER_POST Due: Apr 20

[Mark done](#) [Dismiss](#)

Draft custom follow-up for students missing post-survey

Type: CUSTOM Due: Apr 22

[Mark done](#) [Dismiss](#)

[Create task](#) [View all tasks](#)

Survey Status

STUDENT	PRE-SURVEY STATUS	POST-SURVEY STATUS	LAST UPDATED
Ayana Brooks	Complete	In Progress	Apr 10 — 4:12 PM
Carlos Taylor	Complete	Not Started	Apr 9 — 1:06 PM
Jordan Patel	In Progress	Not Started	Apr 8 — 9:40 AM
Lela Kim	Not Started	Not Started	Apr 7 — 5:18 PM

Use the roster export to share status with district partners. Plan a mid-survey only when the feature flag is enabled.

Admin Overview

- Can export survey data and questions from any program
- Generates codes to create Program Coordinator and other Admin users
- Able to modify the survey: add, edit or delete questions

The screenshot shows the MySTEMGrowth Admin Dashboard. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the MySTEMGrowth logo, 'About', 'Home', and a 'Sign Out' button. The main content area is titled 'MySTEMGrowth Admin Dashboard'. Below the title is a 'Generate Access Code' form with a 'Select Role:' dropdown menu currently set to 'Program Coordinator' and a 'Generate Code' button. Below the form is a table with the following data:

Program Name	PC	# Submissions	Download Results	Download Questions	Action
TestProgram25	Test PC	1	Download Results	Download Questions	Delete
ISU IINSPIRE Summer 2025	Yiqi Liang	0	Download Results	Download Questions	Delete
Senior Design Team F25-S26	Yiqi Liang	6	Download Results	Download Questions	Delete
Caleb2026	Caleb Hemmestad	0	Download Results	Download Questions	Delete
Temp	Ethan Buenting	0	Download Results	Download Questions	Delete

At the bottom of the dashboard, there is a MySTEMGrowth logo.

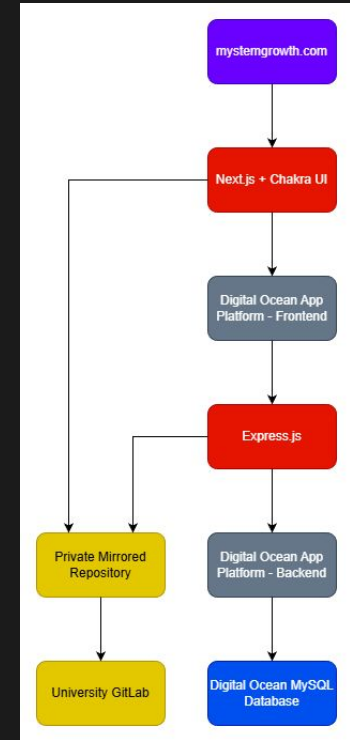
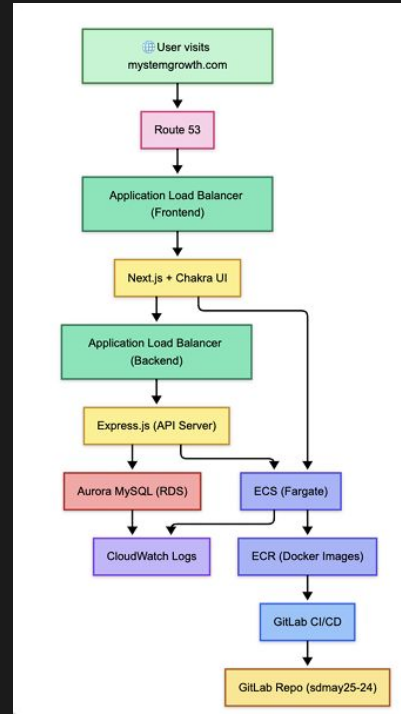
Cloud Infrastructure

- Previous Implementation of the application used Amazon Web Service
- While the hosting service worked, the cost was high and implementation was complicated do to the additional steps needed
- After looking at multiple options, the team opted to move cloud infrastructure to Digital Ocean

CRITERIA	WEIGHT	AWS	DIGITALOCEAN	GCP	AZURE	HEROKU/VERCEL
Cost	0.25	2	5	3	3	4
Ease of Setup	0.20	2	5	3	3	5
Integration w/ Stack	0.20	5	5	4	3	3
Security	0.20	5	4	5	5	3
Scalability	0.15	5	4	5	5	3
Weighted Score		3.7	4.7	4.2	4.0	3.8

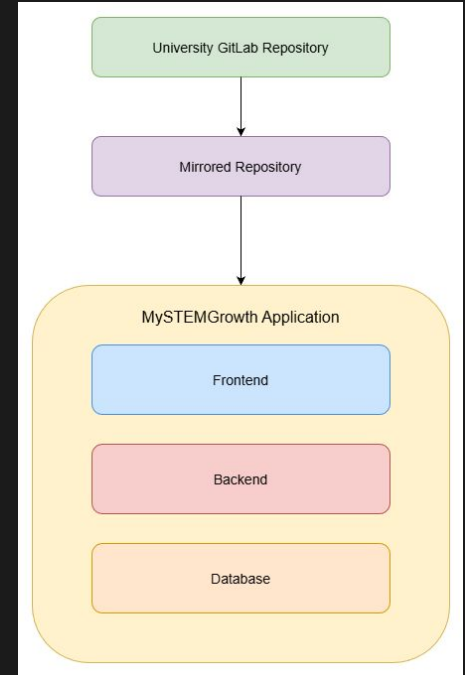
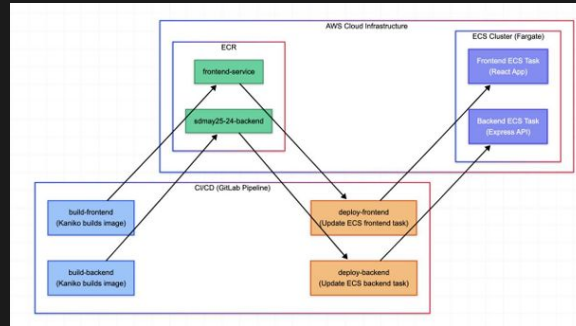
Digital Ocean

- This platform was over 10x cheaper a month to host, with identical performance on the user side of the platform
- Allowed for a more simplistic implementation, made up of a singular App Platform and Database
- App Platform has 2 components, 1 for frontend and 1 for backend and controller handling
- This design allows future admins and maintainers to easily scale the application; resources should be able to be added without needing to learn the ins and outs of the platform



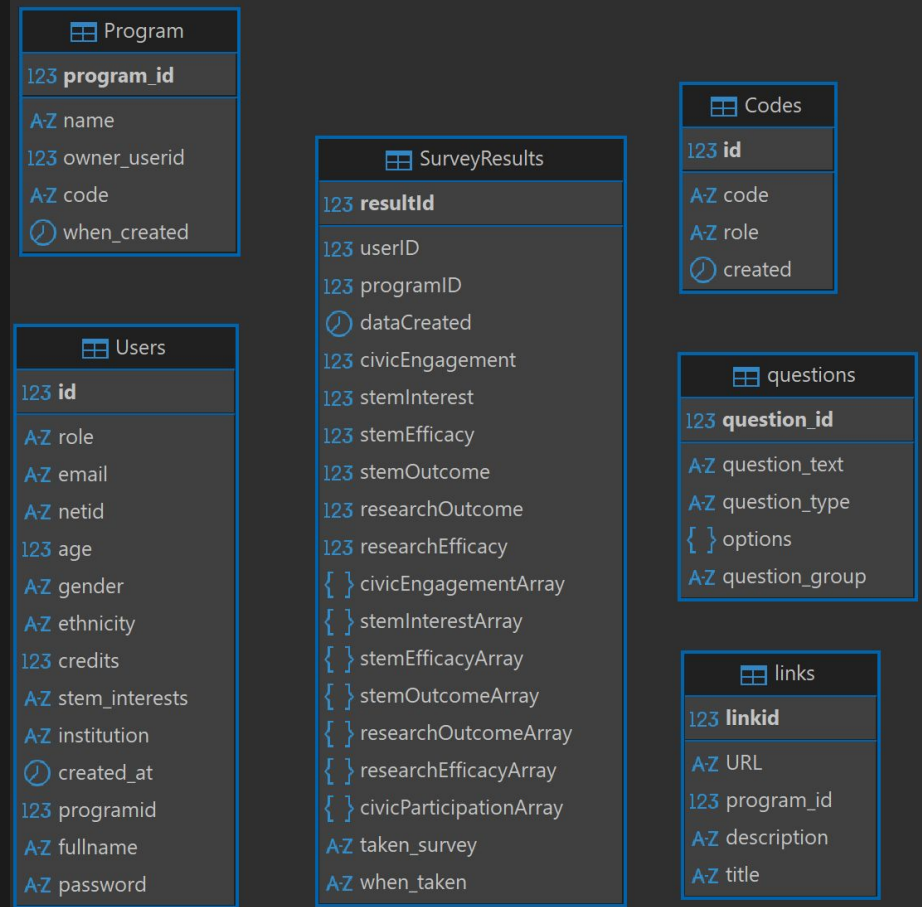
CI/CD Changes

- Digital Ocean offers less flexibility than Amazon Web Service on how it deploys applications
- Could not upload directly from the University Git, so a mirrored repository was needed
- This solution maintains the same level of automation



Backend

- Given a database with data already in it, had to make sure all data was preserved no matter what was done
- Small errors in questions table
- Backend works for what tool was, needs work for desired improvements
- Most tables act independently when tool is being used





You Can't Patch What You Haven't Poked!

Vulnerability Scans

- Outdated software
- Server misconfigurations
- Known vulnerabilities

File Enumeration

- Unauthorized file access
- Sensitive file display
- Directory listing enabled

Authentication Testing

- Login protections
- Session handling
- Error messaging

Input Validation

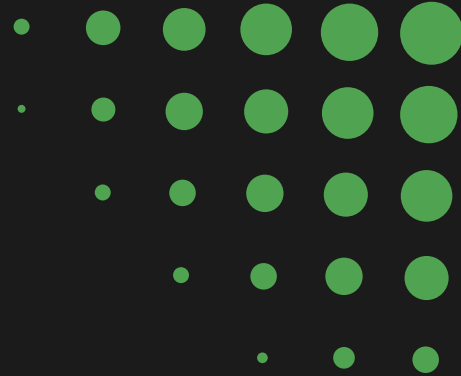
- SQL injection
- Cross-site scripting
- Command injections

Password Security

- Password storage
- Password practices
- Password reset

Vulnerabilities found in website's past deployment

And the Results are..... (not great)



Information Leaks

Sensitive information was exposed for anyone to access

- Passwords stored in plaintext
- Unprotected endpoints
- Sensitive files exposed

Absence of Middleware

Authentication was not supported

- No cookie implementation
- Lack of tokens
- Little authentication required

Password Handling

Secure password practices were not implemented

- No password hashing
- Weak password practices
- Unimplemented account protections

Improvements to Implement

1

Design & Implement Middleware

- Tokens
- Cookies

2

Enforce Secure Password Practices

- Password hashing
- Require strong passwords
- Add login protections

3

Protect Sensitive Endpoints & Files

- Restrict access to website files
- Limit endpoint access

4

Integrate Robust Input Validation & Injection Protection

- Ensure proper input handling
- Prevent injection attacks



Planning for the future

Improving User Dashboard

- User dashboard is sparse, could clean up the overall look
- Create task cards, similar to canvas for individual programs
- Add an option for users to add more programs later, not just at account creation

Updating Export Data Option

- Program Coordinators and Admins can both export data now
- Improve the exportation function to align more closely with researcher's requested format
- Add export to .sav SPSS file

Admin's Program Search

- Admins currently just see a list of all programs on the application
- To ensure the app is usable as it grows, adding search and filter options for programs is needed

Survey Improvements

- Double check the calculations of the survey are working as expected
- Add support for a partial survey being saved for later completion
- Add an option for Program Coordinators to collect identifying information if it aligns with their needs and is within regulations



Questions?